

Returning Back to WSMC After 4 Months Away Was Bitter / Sweet!!!

Since I had raced at WSMC back in January, then took a couple months off of club racing to try my hand at the professional AMA national level, I had high expectations returning to my "old" stomping ground this past weekend.

I had a lot on my plate, with my middle child, Sebastian, graduating from Pre-School on Thursday prior to the race weekend, and then my oldest, Josephine, having her first ballet recital on the Friday night just before I had to drive up to the track for Saturday practice.

The kids' extended family came down and up to see Josephine perform. I packed the RV prior to the late night dancing excursion, so when it ended I would be able to drive up to the track directly before going to sleep for an early Saturday morning practice session.

Once I left our home and made the brief 1-1/2 hour drive to Willow Springs, had me arriving to our "old" camping spot in the turn 1 area just about at midnight. Unfortunately, there was a carting event on this weekend, and the chain-link fence barriers were encroaching too close to where we normally parked our RV for a race weekend.

I ended up moving the barriers and finally got to sleep just after 1 a.m.

Not the most ideal time to go to sleep for an optimal next day riding output.

I awoke to an early 7:00 a.m. alarm clock, compared to the now more familiar 9:40 a.m. AMA Super Stock practice time I had enjoyed for the past couple of race events.

I made my way to the technical inspection area, but diverted to the upper office to acquire my 2005 WSMC Pro race license, since I hadn't attended a WSMC event since the January event.

My bike passed technical inspection, but not without a ton of comments on how good the new Apex Moto paint job that adorned my "old" 2003 GSXR-1000 looked.

I missed the first practice of that Saturday, as I was still eating breakfast, one that met my Nutritionist wife's approval.

Since throwing my hat into the AMA National level of competition ring, I had begun a new training schedule, eating schedule, and riding schedule.

My weight dropped significantly from just over 240 pounds to a now svelter 207 and continually dropping triple digit number.

I had my body composition tested at a local friend's office, www.fitcheq.com, and found out that to be at a realistic racing weight of 188 pounds with 10 % body fat, I would need to drop a few more precious pounds.

Two weeks ago I was 8 pounds heavier, so time is my friend.

Luckily, my beautiful wife and life partner is also a great supporter with not only mental support, but also practical nutritional facts and dietary regulations.

As I made my way to the hot pit for the first time on this Saturday morning practice, disguised in my "new" leathers, I made eye contact with many of my "old" friends of the WSMC, but they didn't recognize me.

I was reminded of this fact, that most hadn't seen my "new" look, when at the end of the first practice session I followed one of the many riders I had passed to their pits to catch up with them from missed months of activities on both of our parts.

They looked at me strangely, until I flipped up my new helmets' visor and made eye contact.

Saturday was an uneventful day of cautious laps with a fastest lap of just over 1 minute 28 seconds.

I had hoped for more speed, but with the amount of time and money spent elsewhere over the past few months, had me riding extremely different tracks, thus becoming less familiar with Willow Springs International Raceway.

I had a great time, but since my entire support system, my family wasn't present, I felt only partially whole this day.

My evening after the practice day was enlightened by having some really good friends inviting me to their trailer for an excellent dinner and great conversation. Thank you Gregg and Kim, you two are the best surrogate MOM and DAD anyone could ask for.

Race day Sunday brought about new tires and new experiences.

My family showed up just before my first race, race number 2, Open Modified Production.

I had a new pair of Dunlop slicks mounted up for the first battle of June 19th.

I made my way out to the track after finding out my lonely rearward grid position, due to no points from the past few months of not competing.

Since I would be gridded at the back of each race group, I knew my starts would have to be spectacular if I wanted to compete with the front runners, as I had in the past.

After the warm-up lap, I proceeded to grid in the 15th spot of 23 racers in the Open Modified Production class.

Since competing in the AMA I expected a lot more 2005 bikes on the grid with my "old" 2003 GSXR-1000 while racing with WSMC.

I was absolutely correct, as most racers had their new bikes race prepped and ready for action this hot desert race day.

The start of this first race had my bike launching as if I had never missed a day out at Willow Springs.

I made up a few spots on the start, but the front runners made their bid to drop us mid-packers as fast as the first turn was encountered.

I rode a fast race pace, but was forced to pass a few more riders during the first couple of laps, combined with even faster riders up front had me turning a fastest lap of just over 1 minute 27 seconds only good enough to finish 10th.

Disappointing, but I expected the racing to be fast, especially since I hadn't been on Willow Springs track in over 4 months.

The second race had me changing tires to DOT race tires in just a couple of races' time.

Open Super Stock was next and again I was gridded almost 2/3rds of the pack back in position 14 of 23 riders.

I made the mistake of baking my tires for just about 2 minutes too long with my tire warmers.

On the warm-up lap, the heat I put into my tires was just enough to over-bake the rubber donut.

Once the race began, I shot forwards like a rocket with multiple boosters ignited at

once.

I made my way around the outside of the main pack into turn one.

I was passing a rider or two in every turn, but by the time I made it around the track to turn 6, a 120 mile per hour up / down right hander, my rear tire had had enough of this temperature increasing pace.

As I crested the turn, my rear slid out to the left and my right foot slipped off of the peg it was weighting.

I anticipated the riders behind me to take full advantage of this mistake, but as we progressed towards turn 7, not one rider made their way around me.

I figuratively cleaned up the inside of my leathers, and made my way into the fastest turn on the track, again without being passed yet.

But towards the middle of turn 8, my mind didn't allow my right wrist to twist as far as I would have wanted to without my near disastrous entrance and exit of turn 6.

Slowly, I felt the riders behind me making their bid to go around me at the end of this first not so perfectly executed lap.

The second lap of this race was turned with a little apprehension and thus a 1:31 lap time was recorded.

The next two laps each decreased in time to circulate the track by 2 seconds, but a red flag came out on the fifth lap, thus cutting our race short.

At the time the red flag came out, I had just turned a 1:27.8, with renewed confidence in my once slippery tires, and was making up ground on the two riders just in front of me.

I finished this race in a not so great 13th spot.

The third race of this hot race weekend was the Formula 1 event.

I was in position 18 of 22 fast riders and needed to change tires once again from my previously run DOT's to the fairly new slicks I had just run one race prior.

Mentally, I was taking a beating on the track, but as I rolled out to grid with the elite WSMC racers I once raced very competitively, I rebuilt my confidence with strong mental images of prior great performances.

As the third race of the day began, I knew I would need to ride well to stay in the hunt of the middle of the pack riders of this race day.

I turned 1:27's at the beginning, middle, and end of the Formula 1 race.

My last lap of the race was my fastest lap, but again a mediocre performance throughout the entire race had me finishing 17th, only making up one spot from my starting position.

The last race of the day was Open Super Bike, and again a mental blow was thrust upon me by my reading of my grid position of 10th of 13 riders.

I slowed down 1 second a lap versus my previous race, and thus I finished 9th.

Mentally, as a racer, starting at the front of the grid is such a great confidence builder, that when you start at the back, you need to be even more confident in your abilities to succeed.

I have learned a lot of valuable lessons over the past two years I have been racing motorcycles, and with my choice to compete at every AMA national Super Stock race next year, I will be calling on not only my physical strength, but my mental strength

as well.

I am presently searching for a couple of 2005 GSXR-1000's to campaign with in the AMA for next year, so I am asking all of you to keep your eyes and ears open for any and all opportunities to help me in the very near future.

I would like to thank my family for continuing to support me as I ascend the ladder of racing with the ultimate reward coming in the third month of 2006 in Daytona. Thank you Jodie, Josephine, Sebastian, and Valentino.

I also want to thank all of my sponsors who will undoubtedly help me race prep my "new" bikes once I take ownership of them, and for the help they have already given me and continue to give me when needed.

Thank you:

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Since I did not get pre-qualified for the Laguna Seca AMA event, I will not be competing, but I plan on being there to cheer on my fellow AMA and Moto GP competitors.

I hope to see some of you there and I plan on perfecting my racing skills to achieve a true race history in the AMA Super Stock class.

Thank you for reading.

Marcel